



Landlord/Tenant Quick Facts

BEFORE THE LEASE IS SIGNED

In Howard County, landlords must first obtain a license from the Howard County Department of Licensing, Inspections and Permits (DILP). Confirm that your landlord is licensed by calling DILP at 410-313-1830.

Landlords may charge prospective tenants an application fee but must return any amount in excess of \$25, or the landlord's actual costs if greater than \$25.

LEASE TERMS

A lease is a contract between a tenant and landlord that obligates the tenant to pay rent in exchange for the use of the property. The lease should be in writing and include:

- The length of the agreement (one year or month-to-month);
- The amount of rent and the date it needs to be paid each month;
- Who (landlord or tenant) is responsible for paying for electricity, gas, heat, water, etc. and who must make repairs. If not specifically stated, it is assumed that repairs will be made by the landlord. DILP can assist tenants if serious repairs are not made in a reasonable time;
- The amount of notice that must be given by the tenant or landlord to terminate the lease, but no less than 30 days;
- The amount of any fee that will be charged for late payment of rent. Late fees, however, cannot exceed 5% of the rent owed; and
- Information about any security deposit the tenant is required to pay.

SECURITY DEPOSITS

Security deposits may be collected by landlords to help offset the cost of any damage, above ordinary wear and tear, caused by the tenant.

- Security deposits (including pet deposits) cannot exceed 2 month's rent
- Tenants must be given, upon request, the opportunity to inspect the property with the landlord at the beginning and end of the lease term;

- If any part of a deposit is withheld, the tenant must be given an itemized list of the damages and the actual cost for repairs;
- The landlord must return the tenant's security deposit plus 3% interest per year, minus damages within 45 days after the tenant moves out.

AT THE END OF THE TENANCY

Early termination:

- If a tenant wants to move out before the end of the lease term, s/he is still responsible for the rent for the remainder of the term BUT, the landlord is required to "mitigate" damages – that is, try to reduce the amount the tenant owes by renting the property to another tenant;

Eviction:

- Landlords can evict tenants for non-payment of rent, failure to move at the end of the lease term, or for breaching any of the lease terms.
- **Eviction is legal process.** Landlords must go to District Court to obtain an Order of Eviction against the tenant before requiring the tenant to vacate the premises, removing the tenant's belongings or changing the locks on the premises.

For additional information on landlord-tenant issues visit us at:

www.howardcountymd.gov/consumer

or contact the Office of Consumer Affairs at:

410- 313-6420

consumer@howardcountymd.gov

To obtain this factsheet in an alternative format, please contact the Office of Consumer Affairs at 410-313-6420 (voice/relay) or email us at consumer@howardcountymd.gov